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PHYSICALLY FIT FOR WHAT?

A timely appraisal of calories
— calisthenics — and
energy-saving household equipment.



by Barbara Forker, Charlotte Roderuck and Elizabeth Beveridge

OUR MODERN HOUSEHOLD equipment helps us save time and effort. *We like this.* But while we have been trimming our work-week and energy output, our appetites have kept on working.

We don't like those extra pounds we've been putting on. The situation doesn't quite seem to make sense, does it?

Then there's the whole question of physical fitness. Does it mean calisthenics every day to keep us trim and fit? Do we have a dishwasher to do the dishes while we do sitting-up exercises? Is this what physical fitness really is? What makes sense in the midst of this "save energy versus use energy" dilemma?

Total Fitness . . .

Today much attention is being placed on physical fitness. But this is only part of a larger goal for everyone. We want to be fit in many ways — physically, socially, intellectually, emotionally, morally and spiritually.

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When we think of physical fitness, however, we tend to think solely of exercise for weight control. But the mere absence of fat does not necessarily mean greater physical fitness. The level of physical fitness for the person who is sedentary and thin may not be very high either.

Physical fitness suggests the question — fit for what? Your body should be fit to carry out your daily chores and activities without undue fatigue and still have energy left over for recreation or emergencies.

This means fitness is a very personal thing. There is no standard. For each of us there is that level which enables us to do physically, and easily, all the things we wish.

Few of us, however, are called upon to use our bodies and energies to the maximum. We become aware of this when our physical capabilities are heavily taxed in hard work, active recreation, or emergencies.

If we are to improve our level of physical fitness, it can only be done by (1) using the body as an instrument of movement; (2) understanding the tie between nutrition and the body (quality of muscles, structure of bones and skeleton) and the vigor of exercise.

Add a third factor: Understanding what home conveniences *can* and *cannot* do for us.

Why Move?

There are benefits from consistent, moderate exercise whether it is in the form of games, sports, everyday work at home or on the job, or pure exercises designed for figure and posture improvement. Body movement is so habitual for us we often fail to realize what benefits result. Here are some:

- Develops muscle fibers. This offsets sluggishness and soft, flabby muscles; gives muscle tone.
- Increases blood circulation to the exercising muscle. This, in turn, supplies oxygen to muscles for energy, removes waste products, permits greater dissipation of heat.

- Improves precision and economy of motion.

- The heart becomes more efficient, is able to circulate more blood while beating less frequently. In other words, we develop strength, endurance (both muscular and cardio-respiratory) and balance.

There is an added factor which relates both to the benefits of exercise and the total idea of fitness. We feel better. Our day looks brighter. We look forward to each new experience. This intangible quality defies measurement, but its presence cannot be overlooked.

Why Watch Calories?

Exercise for weight control is much in the news today. Weight control, more accurately speaking, should be termed *fat control*. Weight as such is not the standard used to determine whether a person is fat or not. We gain weight simply by eating more calories than we burn. It is a delicate balance — the balance between the calories we eat and the calories we burn. Fat accumulation is insidious — 200 calories today unused, 100 or more extra calories tomorrow can add up at the year's end to the next size larger dress.

But to "work off" that extra pound or so of fat takes real doing (see table 1). It's day-to-day consistent exercise, coupled with watching those calories, that keeps fat under control — and your body physically fit from year to year.



Just exercising when the mood strikes isn't the answer.

Tie With Nutrition . . .

Consistent, moderate exercise will burn more energy. This in turn, can trigger a better appetite. A good appetite and good nutrition go together. Good nutrition *underwrites* total physical fitness.

If you actually do not use much energy during the day, do not rely on your appetite as a sensible regulator of your nutrition needs. *You may actually eat too much.* Your appetite does not drop to a low level just because your energy use does.

Actually, your appetite is a better regulator of the amount of food you need when you use energy at a moderate or high level, in other words, are physically active.

Another point. Just because you have lower food energy needs (if you don't exercise much) does not mean your nutritional needs go down also. You must select nutrient-rich foods and cut down on those which are highly refined or rich in fats.

There's a close tie between nutrition and energy and the food you eat. Furthermore, the effects of poor nutrition combined with lack of exercise often do not occur suddenly or dramatically, but rather

slowly and scarcely noticeably. Watch those creeping pounds! They are *not* easy to take off.

Of course health and good nutrition are affected by factors other than food habits (rest and disease for example), but your food and exercise habits are big counters on the physical fitness scoreboard.

What About Equipment?

Where does our modern household equipment fit into this picture of physical fitness and fat control? Does "labor-saving equipment" really save enough energy to add pounds?

Maybe yes — if you no longer lug tons of wet clothes up and out of the basement to drying lines. Probably no — if you've only shifted from a conventional to an automatic washer. The difference in energy use per week in the latter situation is not great.

Does modern equipment cause increased caloric intake? Could be — if using your new range is such fun that you cook more and fancier food. Could be — if the refrigerator or freezer makes it possible for you to prepare so many new foods your meal patterns change drastically.

It is not likely though — if your meal patterns stay as they are — and you look for ways to keep your family and yourself physically active.

Shouldn't you try to save work in housework? By all means — if other demands on your time and energy leave you physically weary in every bone. By all means — if you have some physical limitations that make it wise for you to simplify or eliminate some jobs.

Not so sure — if you are a homemaker with an outside job that keeps you sitting most of each working day. And this goes for a normally healthy person not much pressured by demands on your time and energy.

Here's a tip: Take a brisk walk while your dishwasher does dishes. You'll enjoy it and use almost six times the number of calories.

If equipment doesn't contribute to physical fitness, should you have it?

Definitely yes! The maintenance of sanitary conditions is important to health, too. So is comfort in your home. However, do think twice before you choose equipment only for its labor-saving ability, and before you make this the basis for choosing between different models.

Is equipment justifiable from a mental outlook standpoint?

Certainly — if it enables you to do the important task of homemaking with more zest.

It is not so vital in the scheme of things if having it denies you and your family something else that might make a greater contribution.

Equipment well used can help accent good use of body movements; if not well used — it can make body muscles lazy.

In Summary . . .

The Journal of the American Medical Association says "Optimal fitness permits a person to enjoy life to the fullest."

This takes in your daily works and those avocational interests and extra challenges that may interrupt your daily routine.

TABLE 1. Caloric requirements.

House work	Cal/hr.
Sewing	10- 30
Sitting at rest.....	15
Ironing (with 5 lb. iron).....	60
Dishwashing	60
Sweeping or dusting.....	80-130
Polishing	150-200
Physical exercise	
Walking (2 mph).....	200
Walking (4 mph).....	350
Golf	300
Tennis	400-500
Swimming (crawl)	700-900
Skating (fast)	300-700

